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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## WATER COLOR PAINTING.

BY JAMES CARRUTHERS.

WATER color as compared with oil painting may be said in pictorial delineations to excel in softness and delicacy of hue, and to supply the painter with greater means of representing atmospheric effects, including those of perspective. Objects are shown as fading more gently from the sight, and therefore more naturally, distance is rendered more palpable to the eyes, and what are strictly aerial effects are more pleasingly rendered.

When water color painting is executed on paper the absorbency of the ground and the granulous character of the surface is all in its favor. Then, again, white is but slightly tinted. On wood surfaces and using oil as a vehicle, the painter necessarily proceeds to prime to obtain a solid impervious surface, and to maintain in their integrity successive coats of paint. The roughness of the texture of the paper used, visible to some extent to the naked eye, but far more conspicuous under the telescope, is an obvious scenical advantage as delicately varying the surface, the elevations receiving less color than the depressions. Thus what the most skilful manipulation could not fully effect, is accomplished by the conditions of surface. Oil painting is apt to fill up all interstices of surface, unless where there is extreme irregularity, and in certain styles of mural painting this irregularity is provided for in the variation of the wall surface, so as to create, like water color on boards, lights and half lights, shadows and half shadows, the cavities receiving more color and reflecting less light. The eye averages these variations and harmonizes them. In fresco work we see this very fully illustrated, through the multitude of particles of the crystalized hydrate of lime admitting of tender, airy gradations.

The water color artist on paper has at his command and obtains some of his finest effects by applying washes, which float the color over the ground, diversifying by different shades or depths the self same color. These washes are applied, when properly done, rapidly and accurate with a brush full of water. It will frequently happen that by these washes fine accidental effects, in perfect harmony with the design, are obtained.

The fame of most of the great painters whose names are associated with the period of the Renaissance, was achieved by use of water color. They showed by their superb frescos in churches, monasteries and other edifices that water colors are adapted to the highest ranges of art, that grace and beauty, strength and grandeur lie within its compass. Among the names that have been made famous by their genius in this line for all time, are Cimabue, Giotto, Masaccio, Ghirlandaio (Michael Angelo's master), Perugino (the master of Raphael), Raphael, Lionarde da Vinci, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Andrea del Sarto, Andrea Mantegna, Correggio, Buonarrotti and others.

We have very fully described in our columns the process of fresco painting, one charm of which is in the luminosity of the colors. In fresco and secco lime is mixed with the colors themselves; not so in tempera painting. Some of the Renaissance painters introduced gold into their fresco designs.

## FRENCH PAPER HANGINGS.

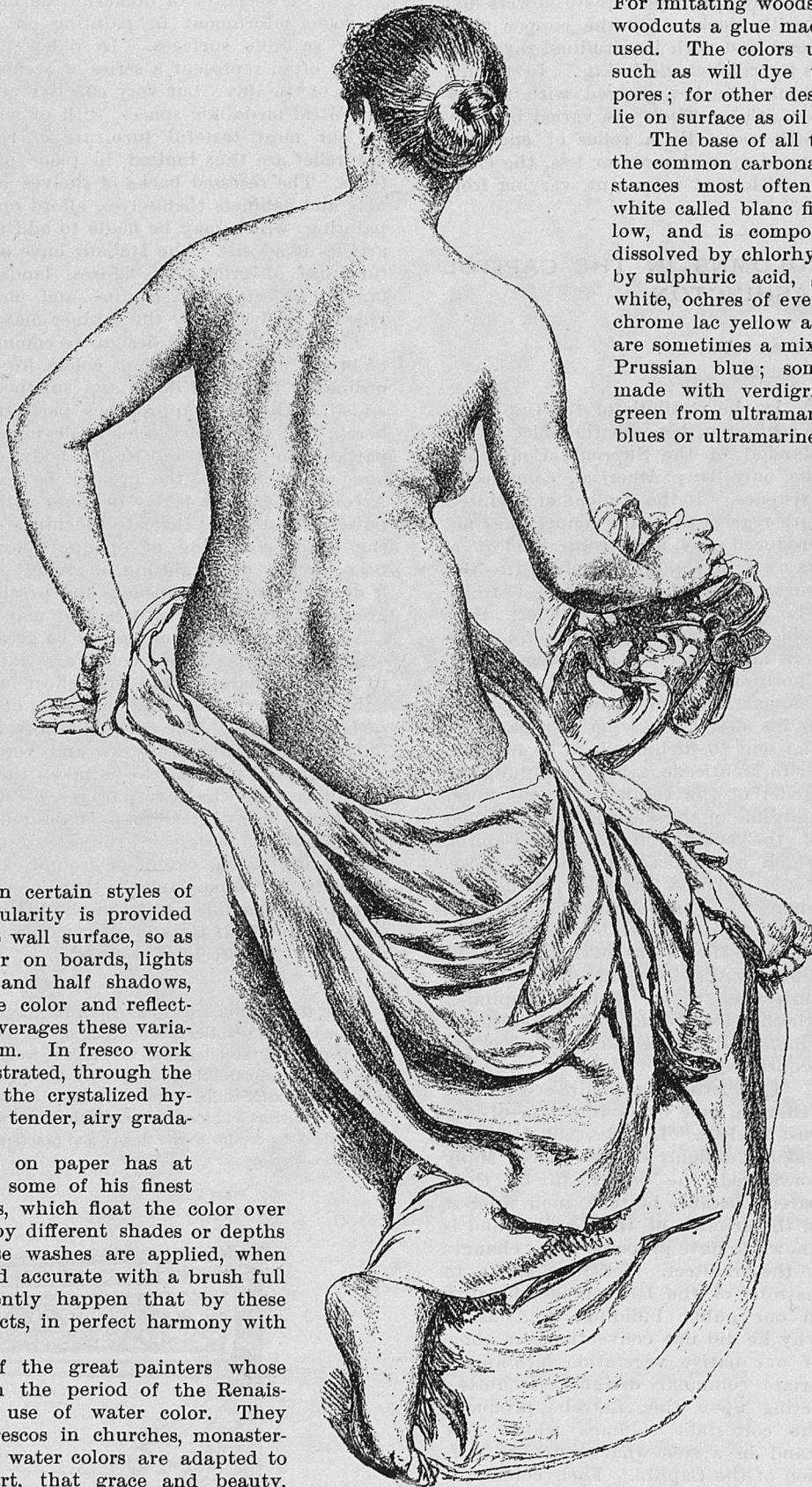
IT will be of interest to sketch the process by which in the Parisian manufactories of paper hangings the paper receives its ornamentation. The several qualities of the paper on which fancy devices, flowers, figures, gilding and various imitations of stuffs, marbles and wood are displayed is classed as gray, ordinary gray and fine white, and, except for special purposes, is made of the uniform size of four square metres. The vehicle of the colors is animal glue, composed of shreadings of rabbit skins or old harness leather. For imitating woods and for impressions from woodcuts a glue made from amyllum or starch is used. The colors used for imitating stuffs are such as will dye the paper, penetrating its pores; for other descriptions the colors merely lie on surface as oil point on prepared canvas.

The base of all the ordinary tints is whiting, the common carbonate of lime. The other substances most often employed are a peculiar white called blanc fixe, which does not turn yellow, and is composed of carbonate of baryta dissolved by chlorhydric acid and precipitated by sulphuric acid, glaze paste, aluminous lime white, ochres of every shade, yellows made with chrome lac yellow and yellow oak. The greens are sometimes a mixture of chrome yellow and Prussian blue; sometimes Schweinfurt green, made with verdigris and arsenic; sometimes a green from ultramarine. The blues are Prussian blues or ultramarine.

The reds are lacs, either from woods or from cochineal. The blacks are German black or bone black. Colors are applied by brushes or by blocks formed of three layers of wood, the fibres crossing alternately, so as to avoid warping, and fixed by a glue called cheese glue, because it is made with cheese *a la pie*. The two first layers are of pine; the last, on which the design is engraved, of pear. The edges are faced with slips of brass. For grounding the paper the roll is spread on a large table, one end held by a fixed vice, the other by a movable vice gently balanced by a weight, so as to stretch the paper whilst a coat of equal and smooth color is being laid. In certain high priced qualities several coats of color are employed in grounding, and the paper is then polished and satined. French manufacturers have not as yet got beyond the arrangement for rubbing of a brush fixed at end of a movable lever, and attached by huge joints to the ceiling of the workshop, and moving backwards and forwards. For marbles and imitations of Persian calicoes, the satining is executed with a simple flint or agate fixed at the end of a counterweighted rod, worked in a pear wood groove. To give further

brilliancy wax soap is employed. Varnishing of glazed papers is of course the same all the world over.

The palette of the colors is a woolen cloth spread upon leather or strong canvas soaked with linseed oil. The apparatus rests on a strongly constructed table, surmounted by a horizontal beam, fastened to the ceiling by two baulks, which supports beneath it the end of a wooden lever. The printer spreads out a roll, held by means of a rod fastened to the free end of a table, and the palette having been sufficiently coated, and



DESIGN FOR THE CEILING OF THE NEW VIENNA OPERA HOUSE,  
BY M. CHARLEMONT.

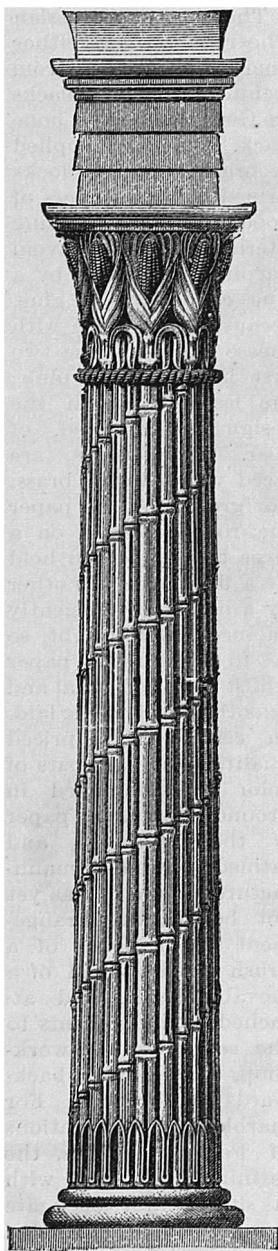


guided by certain starting pegs, is attached to the paper. For block printing the workman places a beam on the block, on the beam he rests a lever, the end of which is jammed under the cross bar, and on making a sign an apprentice springs on the other end of a wooden lever, and by his weight determines a pressure, which he often repeats several times. Descending from his perch the apprentice sets himself quickly to spreading a new coat of color on the palette; the printer rests his lever on a cross peg, fastened to a corner of the table, and looks to see how he has succeeded, repairing with the pencil any defects, and sometimes erasing with a little moveable roller the grain of the color.

Rollers engraved in relief are now more extensively employed. On the design imparted by the copper plate flowers and other ornaments are printed with blocks. By the copper plate process transverse rays are combined with longitudinal rays, producing Scotch tartan designs for *cabinets de toilette*. In tracing the longitudinal lines a triangular bucket, pierced with narrow tubes filled with color, is used. Color effects are varied by stopping up some of the tubes with wax. By a roller of engraved brass, in which the designs are deepened more or less, the effect called camaïen is obtained, with tint over tint, varying from clear to deep.

## THE CORN-STALK COLUMNS IN THE CAPITOL AT WASHINGTON.

BY EUGENE ASHTON.



CORN-STOCK COLUMN.

In the vestibule of the Capitol at Washington, beneath the office of the Marshal of the Supreme Court, are the only truly American columns in existence. If the student of architecture regrets that this country has not produced any architectural effort of its own, he should be referred to this work of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who succeeded Messrs. Hallett, Hadfield & Hoban as the Capitol architect, and perfected the designs of Dr. Thornton. In a letter of Latrobe's to Thomas Jefferson he refers as follows to his designs: "I have packed up and sent to Richmond, to be forwarded to Monticello, a box containing the model of the columns for the lower vestibule of the senatorial department of the north wing of the Capitol, which is composed of ears of maize."

These capitals, during the summer season, obtained me more applause from the members of Congress than all the works of magnitude or difficulty that surround them. They christened them 'corn-cob capitals,' whether for the sake of alliteration I cannot tell, but certainly not very appropriately."

This letter was addressed to Mr. Jefferson, and bears the date of August 28, 1800. Latrobe, not Jefferson, was the designer of the pillars. Many considered the latter to be their parent, because he took such interest in the erection of the Capitol, and is known to have proposed many changes to the architect. Jefferson spoke to Latrobe of the lack of individuality in our public buildings, and asked why he did not conventionalize some of our native vegetation into appropriate columnar designs. Doubtless acting upon this, Latrobe produced the corn-stalk columns which now stand in a somewhat unnoticed portion of the Capitol. Each column is composed of a cluster of Indian corn-stalks bound together so that the joints of one stalk stand slightly

above the preceding one; thus, by the recurrence of the joints in the seven divisions of every stalk, a spiral effect is produced. The capitals are composed of ears of maize with the half-open husks displaying the corn, which in its upright position has been criticised as being too stiff. Whatever the faults of the original pillars may be, they are a bold stride toward forming for ourselves an ornamentation peculiarly in keeping with our new and vigorous government. That our buildings have to be supported by the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns, unrelieved by any-

thing of our own conception, is strange, when we consider the independence of the people of the United States. We have given to the Old World our mechanical inventions, the benefits of scientific research, yet we borrow from the East our architectural forms. Mrs. Trollope, in viewing these columns, called them the most beautiful things she saw in primitive America.

## COLOR IN DESIGN.

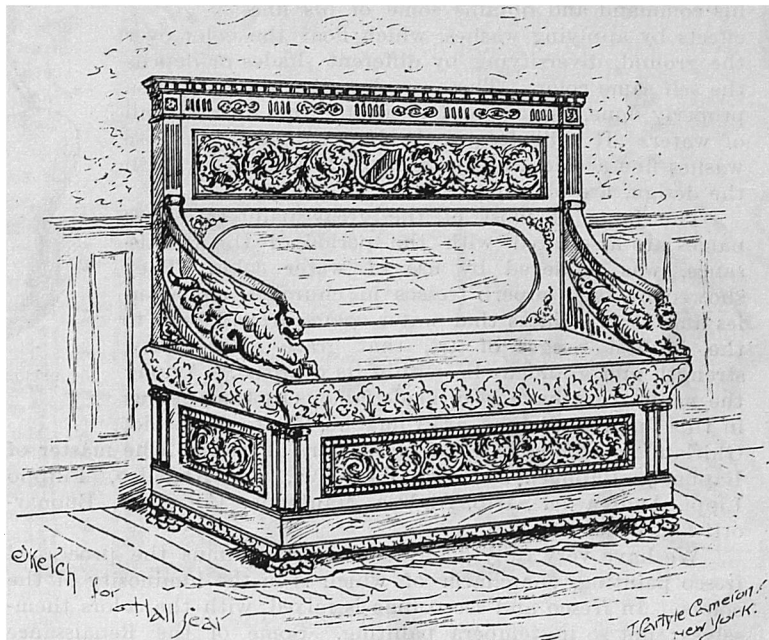
WHAT happier employment of leisure can there be to the ladies of a household—hours not occupied in sociality or domestic routine of duty—in contributing to room adornment in painting on panels of dados, doors, or other suitable surfaces. In olden times full panelled rooms would often represent a series of scenes from the romancists and poets of the day; but very effective adornment may be secured, in central medallion spaces, with or without corner enrichments. In our most tasteful furniture of rich hardwoods, carvings in low relief are thus limited, in place of the former all over patterns. The recessed backs of shelves of dressers with over-cabinets and cabinets themselves, afford opportunities for this hand painting, which may be made to add an intrinsic value to the articles it adorns. The Italians have always favored painting on furniture of groups of figures, landscape, marine scenes and fanciful objects, sunk, ovaline and circular recesses being provided in such case by the cabinet maker.

In a wall or panel design we commend the use at the outset of bright and even brilliant colors, for in the finishing these will ordinarily be cooled down and subdued. Any cool color can be added as the work approaches perfection. It is to be remembered, too, that every color in drying will sink, and that it will partake, in proportion to its body, of the color on which it is laid, unless, indeed, the ground be extremely light and clear. A common error is to lay in tones and shadows with too much power and depth. Delicate touchings of glazing and scumbling, the latter consisting of opaque colors, will improve what has been already done, glazing in giving greater softness, scumbling if done in strokes of freedom and precision, emphasizing or giving greater character to features that may need it.

A colored design may often be greatly heightened by the use of glazing colors. These colors are transparent, the object being to give transparency and the effect of depth, obtained by the light passing through the particles of the glazing color to the surface beneath. The glazing colors are all lake colors, cobalt, burnt sienna, vandyke brown and verdigris. In painting on a gilded ground care has to be taken that the colors are not such as will be somewhat overpowered by its brilliance, so rendering the figures less defined than is desired; much depends on the position of the design in respect to natural or artificial light, and, again, on the extent of ground exposed. A skilful use may be made of "broken tone"—that is, a color effect produced by introducing modified traits of the main colors used, these telling as accents. Half tints in the vicinity of contrasted colors serve to modify the effects of contrast.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER for August makes note of the many improvements and beauties in the fitting up of houses, offices and theatres. Its double page of "architectural materials" from Parisian sources exhibits original design and careful drawing. Of carvings, portieres, furniture, mantels, sideboards, parlor walls, curtains, panels, friezes, beds, book cases, pictured windows, mirrors and screens there is the usual abundance, and the reading matter, both as it pertains to the theory and practice of decorative art, repays study.

—The Brooklyn Eagle.



DESIGN FOR HALL SEAT, BY T. CARLYLE CAMERON.